



Office of the Mayor

NEWS RELEASE

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5:30 p.m.

Opening ceremony set for Thursday for Riverside Trail

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Mayor Stephen J. Luecke, South Bend Common Council members, neighborhood residents and recreation advocates invite the public to join in a ceremony next Thursday, July 19, to officially open the first 1.75-mile phase of the Riverside Trail.

The ceremony will begin at 1 p.m. Thursday on the 800-foot-long cantilevered river overlook and observation deck across from Keller Park. Participants should park at Keller Park or along the west side of Riverside Drive, where a segment of the street will temporarily be closed from 12:50 to 1:30 p.m. Thursday.

At the ceremony, the mayor will announce the timetable for completion of the Riverside Trail's second phase, which will extend the trail north from its temporary termination point at Oakwood Boulevard to the Darden Road pedestrian bridge. When completed, the trail will run 3.2 miles from Angela to Darden (where St. Joseph County soon will start a federally aided project to build a multipurpose trail east along Darden to Indiana 933).

"As construction has progressed, it has uncovered the beauty of the St. Joseph River. For weeks people have walked, jogged, cycled or roller skated along the unfinished trail," Luecke said. "We want to provide a time for the community to come together to celebrate this new treasure in our community and to officially announce that trail construction is complete. The Riverside Trail is fully safe and ready for use. And we hope those who attend the ceremony will illustrate the full range of trail usages."

Crews plan to complete trail construction on Tuesday with Wednesday set aside for cleanup and other final details, including laying sod and hydroseeding lawn along the length of the trail. Other landscaping work will take place in the fall. A formal dedication is anticipated later in the fall.

Community residents identified trails to encourage walking and bicycling as one of the city's top priorities during the development of City Plan, South Bend's 20-year comprehensive plan.

The first phase of the Riverside Trail cost \$1.79 million to build a 9,225-foot long and 10-foot wide path built from more than 1,600 tons of asphalt laid over 3,500 tons of compacted aggregate. The trail includes more than 1,000 feet of decorative steel railings, many installed in places where crews reinforced the riverbank to prevent erosion.

The trail features five "nodes" where users can fish or take in the view while sitting on benches or strolling along side paths. There are six marked pedestrian crossings featuring decorative light posts and flashing warning lights that will be activated by pedestrians pushing crosswalk buttons.

LaPorte Construction has served as the general contractor on the project, which was designed by the Troyer Group in conjunction with city engineering staff. South Bend's Parks and Recreation Department has worked on landscaping and will be responsible for ongoing maintenance of the park, which adds more than 5 acres to South Bend's nearly 1,300 acres of park land citywide.

South Bend's share of the federal gas tax supported 80 percent of the project cost by means of a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. (Officially the grant is through the Federal Highway Administration Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program by means of the "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users" or SAFETEA-LU.) The remaining 20 percent is covered by the City of South Bend's general fund.

The City of South Bend's commitment to a dedicated walking and bicycle trail along the St. Joseph River began in the 1970s. Completion of the entire Riverside Trail segment will bring the total trail system to more than 11 miles in length.

Luecke issued a directive in his 2007 State of the City address to complete a riverwalk system from Logan Street to Darden Road in the first five years of City Plan implementation, calling upon staff to start engineering plans in 2007 for the remaining segments.